

Ingram Micro: Cloud Computing Is Coming, Are You Ready?

By [Scott Campbell](#), ChannelWeb

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Cloud computing is a real opportunity, one that solution providers need to embrace now before customers start asking questions you can't answer, said Justin Crotty, Ingram Micro (NYSE:[IM](#)) vice president of services sales.

"I'm really tired of hearing that in cloud computing there's no value proposition for distributors and solution providers. You hear it from a lot of [software](#) companies, especially small ones that don't have channel DNA. But just because you buy something or provision something doesn't mean it's going to work. They're discounting the value the VAR has at the end user level," Crotty said at Ingram Micro's VentureTech Invitational conference in Hollywood, Fla., on Thursday.

Cloud computing is still an evolving technology, but solution providers should not be afraid to take risks -- and learn from mistakes, Crotty said.

He cited an interview with skier Picabo Street, who was asked why her crashes were so spectacular. "Because I go fast," Street said.

Tackling innovation is the same thing, Crotty said. "You never see a skier crash slow because they were going slow. It will take thinking about new things and taking risks.

"When we start managed services [at Ingram Micro], we ran into dark days. And the dark days could be really, really dark. The key is to move through it. Figure out what you did wrong and improve," he said.

A VAR's integration capabilities will be a key component to cloud computing, according to Crotty.

"That's what people are missing who discount the channel. It's all about integration. It might be migrating to more application integration, but this stuff is not going to be easy to use. Just because it's delivered out of a cloud or in a different manner isn't going to make it work," he said. "To think of an end user [provisioning](#) lots of services from lots of companies is dead wrong. That's where the solution provider proposition is."

Distributors like Ingram Micro (NYSE:[IM](#)) still have aggregation capabilities far beyond what a small or new cloud company, such as providing billing, usage, and reporting, Crotty added.

Ingram Micro plans to roll out a more detailed cloud strategy around June, Crotty said.

"Relevance is a big issue here. As your customers start to be interested in these new technologies, you need to be relevant to them. I need to have education and training so we're relevant to you. There's going to be all kinds of economic opportunities for solution providers and IT in general around cloud. The dollars your customer spent on traditional solutions will start to migrate to cloud solutions. How do I maintain those revenue dollars revenue in my business? By having solutions to migrate to."

Cloud computing won't overwhelm a VAR's business now but it will increase over the next 12 to 18 months, he said. "There's a value proposition to be built. There's margin in complexity, and complexity is going to be massive with all these thousands of ISVs and tech deliverers. Getting all that to work together is going to be a problem. It's real; it's relevant; it's accelerating. It's going to be significant in a short period of time."